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Globalization and interdependence: international migration and development

Letter dated 1 September 2006 from the President of the Economic and Social Council addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to transmit herewith, in accordance with decision 44/101 of the Commission for Social Development and as agreed by the Economic and Social Council, the Chairperson's summary of the panel discussion on international migration and migrants from a social perspective, held in 2004 during the forty-second session of the Commission for Social Development (see annex), for the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, to be held on 14 and 15 September 2006.

I would like to request that the present letter and its annex be issued as a document of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, under agenda item 54 (b).

(*Signed*) Ali **Hachani**
President
Economic and Social Council

* A/61/150.

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Annex

Chairperson's summary of the panel discussion on international migration and migrants from a social perspective**

At its 10th meeting, on 10 February 2004, under item 3 (c) of its agenda, "Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting social development", the Commission for Social Development held a panel discussion on the theme "International migration and migrants from a social perspective". The Chairperson of the Commission, Jean-Jacques Elmiger (Switzerland), acted as moderator. The members of the panel were Gerónimo Gutiérrez (Vice-Minister for North America of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico) and Jan O. Karlsson (Co-Chair of the Global Commission on International Migration).

International migration is a complex phenomenon with demographic, economic, legal and social facets. It has a North-South dimension, although not uniquely, since the movements of people across the world are increasingly diversified. It has a strong regional dimension, notably when regions have embarked into processes of cooperation and integration. A prominent example is the European Union. In addition, international migration is an inherent and critical aspect of the current process of interdependence and globalization.

It was generally agreed that international cooperation in this domain ought to be reinforced: for some, as a matter of urgency; for others, in a very gradual manner; for all, by building on existing forms of cooperation, notably the various regional processes. The main objectives of this strengthened international cooperation would be to better manage migratory movements, to protect international migrants and, as part of the process of cooperation, to progressively envisage the establishment of a normative framework acceptable to all countries concerned. The notion of shared responsibility was evoked.

Means to these objectives include a change in the overall negative perception that currently marks migration in parts of the world, entailing a great effort for communication on the positive role of migrants — notably their economic contribution to host countries. Regarding the countries of origin of the migrants and the benefits they derive from the emigration of their citizens, the question of remittances was discussed. While these remittances are important from an economic and development viewpoint, it was recalled that they are part of personal income and that the main issue for bilateral and international cooperation is to ensure that they can be easily and cheaply transferred by the immigrants themselves. The question of brain drain was also mentioned. Some developing countries are losing people essential to their development — for instance, in the health sectors — without the ability to compete to retain such personnel. Not all developing countries benefit in return from "brain gain".

In addition to improving communication and disseminating accurate facts, an equally great effort is needed to produce reliable information, data and concepts adjusted to the changing realities of international migration. Moreover, the active involvement of Governments and other national and international, public and private actors of the development process is required in the various aspects of strengthened

** *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 6* (E/2004/26), annex III.

cooperation on migratory issues. As international migration is still primarily the result of income and resource differences and imbalances between countries and regions, the effects of international economic, trade and financial trends and policies on employment and income opportunities in countries of emigration should be carefully assessed. All forms of international cooperation are linked. Strengthened and effective international cooperation on migration and the situation of migrants will depend on the quality and coherence of related national policies.

It was also generally agreed that a social perspective on international migration and the situation of migrants was a legitimate and useful facet of more active international cooperation. This social perspective ought to be focused on the perceptions of the issue, the well-being of the migrants and the effects of migration on the social fabric of the countries concerned. A clear and secure legal status, a decent job yielding a sufficient income and access to social services and social benefits are key elements of the well-being and personal security of immigrants. Their social protection is essential to their integration. The protection and enhancement of their rights remain fundamental and should not be seen in terms of the costs involved, but rather in terms of the building of a peaceful and harmonious world community. Exploitation, discrimination, xenophobia and racism towards immigrants are scourges that will be eliminated by forceful and coherent policies at all levels. The situation of women and children, often victims of exploitation and abuse, was emphasized as requiring determined forms of cooperation.

An important aspect of international cooperation on migration from a social perspective would be the establishment or strengthening of precise and efficient mechanisms and processes for dialogue, exchange of information and knowledge and exchange of experiences between Governments, involving the other actors concerned. These exchanges would take into account the needs and prospects of the members of the international community and would integrate elements such as the evolution of technologies, demographic trends, questions of security and the various gaps, inequalities and forms of poverty that ought to be eliminated. The involvement of migrants themselves and of organizations of civil society and the private sector in such processes was emphasized.

The Commission was apprised of the launching of the Global Commission on International Migration, co-chaired by Jan Karlsson and Mamphela Ramphele.